

Herefordshire Council Comprehensive Equality Policy (CEP) Action Plan (otherwise known as “Corporate Equality Plan”)

Introduction

The Comprehensive Equality Policy (CEP) is the overriding document that sets out the Council’s commitment to achieving excellence and meeting its responsibilities to promote and implement equality when it is:

- Providing services
- Purchasing services
- Employing staff or
- Working in partnership with other organisations

The CEP provides the focus to ensure that the Council meets the criteria needed to reach Level 2 of the Equality Standard by 2007.

This Action Plan is the document that sets out how we are going to achieve this. It is the action plan that brings all the strands of the diversity agenda together. It should be noted that both the Race Equality Scheme (RES) and the Disability Equality Scheme (DES) are sub-sections of the CEP and therefore their action plans sit as appendices to this Plan.

It should also be noted that both the Race Equality Scheme and the Disability Equality Scheme are driven by single focus steering groups where performance and progress is monitored. These steering groups make reports to the Diversity Group, which has overall responsibility for progress on mainstreaming diversity issues through the Council, and achievement of the local authority Equality Standard.

This document sets out specific actions to achieve corporate objectives based on service need. It is a tool that will be used to monitor progress and report on levels of achievement. It will focus on ensuring that the Council has mechanisms, processes and procedures in place to achieve Level 2 of the Equality Standard.

The Equality Standard is split into four main areas, and this action plan has been designed to reflect this:

1. Leadership and Corporate Commitment
2. Consultation, Community Development and Scrutiny
3. Service Delivery and Customer Care
4. Employment and Training

Key

CDT: Corporate Diversity Team

CEP: Comprehensive Equality Policy

CRM: Customer Relationship Management

DES: Disability Equality Scheme

DG: Diversity Group

DSG: Disability Staff Group

DWG: Disability Working Group

EIA: Equality Impact Assessment

EOS: Employee Opinion Survey

HEP: Herefordshire Equality Partnership

RES: Race Equality Scheme

RESG: Race Equality Steering Group

RESG: Race Equality Staff Group

RRAA: Race Relations Amendment Act

A shaded area means action completed

1) Leadership & Corporate Commitment

Action	Lead Officer	Evidence	Target Date	Progress at August 06
Publish CEP Action Plan in full range of appropriate formats	Corporate Diversity Team	CEP document	March 06	Published on web and intranet
Consult on Action Plan – review/amend Action Plan in line with consultation	Corporate Diversity Team	Consultation with stakeholders, minutes of meetings RESG, DWG, DG	Sept 05	Action plan in place and progress on actions being made
Monitor and assess use of Y1 Impact Assessments and action plans	Directorate Improvement Manager	Action plans incorporated into service plans. Corporate guidance to indicate process	2006 service plans	Guidelines incorporated into service planning 06/07 – Diversity identified as a cross cutting theme and incorporated into performance monitoring and service planning
Develop corporate mechanism for assessing development of service level equality objectives and targets	Directorate Improvement managers with Heads of Service	Service planning guidance incorporating EIA requirements – Diversity Group to assess progress at regular monthly meetings	April 2006	Diversity Group directorate representatives reporting monthly on directorate progress on equality actions
Create corporate structure for overseeing development of information and monitoring systems	Corporate Diversity Team	IT systems in place – Baseline data collected via research team. CRM –complaints monitoring in place	CRM system in place from September 05. Monitoring form in place January 06 process to be rolled out to be completed by March 2007	CRM system in place for dealing with and monitoring complaints of a discriminatory nature, however work still to be done on improving CRM (esp. reporting). Agreed monitoring form in place and used in EOS and DES. Wider use to be rolled out through EIAs
Ensure that mechanisms for responding to harassment on the grounds of race, disability and gender are in place	Corporate Diversity Team	Corporate complaints system and data of internal and external caseload from Personnel and HEP	January 2006	CRM system in place and Corporate Diversity Team investigating all complaints of a discriminatory nature

Action	Lead Officer	Evidence	Target Date	Progress at August 06
Adopt a timetable of self-assessment for Directorates to ensure progress for Level 2 is on track	Corporate Diversity Team	Briefing sessions given and assessment documentation completed.	Start of process April - 2007	Completion of all programmed Equality Impact Assessments.
Develop corporate equality self-assessment and audit procedures	Corporate Diversity team	Briefing given and assessment documentation completed – (possible introduction of computerised monitoring system)	Start Process April 2006	Research into system on-going. Visit to LA using the system scheduled for January 06 – Investigation concluded not cost effective to set up IT system – further investigation needed.
Assessment of required resources	Director of Corporate & Customer Service	Audit of work and resources identified. Introduce into budget cycle	Budget Cycle for 2006	CDT set up in the new structure, further capacity being built into re-structure of directorates. Appointments confirmed
Allocation of resources	Director of Corporate & Customer Service		April 2006	Further work on-going through business planning and budget cycle. Budget identified and agreed.

2) Consultation, Community Development & Scrutiny

Action	Lead Officer	Evidence	Target Date	Progress at August 06
Develop a consultation strategy to cover EIA and Diversity policies including the RES, DES, and CEP with all stakeholder groups (Herefordshire Equality Partnership)	Martin HR Community Involvement Manager / Research Team	Consultation strategy - coordinated internal and external process documented. Minutes of meetings.	Start process April 2006	DES consultation completed – EIA consultation planned for September-January 2007

Action	Lead Officer	Evidence	Target Date	Progress at August 06
Review equality content in strategic documents/policies/Community Strategy	RRAA: Chair of RESG – Carol Trachonitis Disability: Chair of DWG – George Salmon Other Equalities issues – Chair of DG – Jane Jones	Through the Race Equality Scheme/Disability Equality Scheme and CEP action plan ensure that policies/functions are assessed across all diversity strands and regularly reviewed	2008 (3 year rolling programme)	Rolling programme of work linked to EIA and directorate service plans. Diversity identified as cross cutting theme in Community Strategy and through EIAs, mainstreaming diversity throughout the organisation.
Develop consultation focus groups with stakeholders and the wider community on all aspects of equality policy	Chairs of staff groups / MH – Community involvement Manager	Minutes of meetings at staff groups (Race, disability) Community strategy / consultation strategy	On-going process to start April 2006	Staff groups established April 2006, minutes of meetings distributed. Plans in place to develop a community diversity focus group March 2007
Consult with members, employee representatives and service areas on equality impact and needs/requirements	Chairs of staff groups	Reports and member briefings, staff groups and focus groups as identified in community strategy	Start process April 2006	Members awareness session and staff groups set up to support the work of EIAs. Presentation at Mangers Forum 12 July 06
Each department and service area to engage in equality self assessment and scrutiny and audit on its service delivery	All Service managers	Through EIA action plans and monitoring recorded for each service area	Rolling programme 2004 – 06/07	Y3 of a three year rolling programme of assessments to be completed by Aug 06. Actions to be identified in Equality Action plans for service areas and directorates.

Action	Lead Officer	Evidence	Target Date	Progress at August 06
Ensure that the equality policy and objectives are incorporated in "partnership" arrangements and procurement arrangements engaged in by the Authority	Director of Resources and Lead Officer for procurement	Minutes of meetings. Contracts to reflect council's diversity policies and the procurements strategy to incorporate diversity policies.	Process to start April 2006	Identification through EIAs of partners and contractors and existing agreements to review and ensure that diversity issues are taken into consideration. On-going process

3) Service Delivery & Customer Care

Action	Lead Officer	Evidence	Target Date	Progress at August 06
Ensure planned programme of department/service area impact assessments are carried out	Director of Corporate & Customer Services	Service area documentation EIA	3 year programme to be completed August 2006	Year 3 assessments to be completed August 2006
Ensure planned agreed service area equality objectives and targets are agreed	Heads of service	EIA actions plans to be signed off through service planning process by Heads of service.	March 07	EIAs to inform equality targets in service planning process for 2007/8.
Ensure the procurement function and all contracted services and partnership agreements are reviewed to reflect equality policies	Procurements Officer Contracts Officers	Timetable of contract reviews and procurement documentation	To be completed by March 2007	Individual service areas picking this up through EIAs, however due to restructure more work needs to be achieved at corporate level
Set up equality criteria for external contractors/partnerships	Procurement lead officer	Procurement strategy	To be completed by March 2007	See above
Ensure that each service area has approved and established planning groups for monitoring and information systems	Service managers	CRM system in place and data collection	To be completed by March 2007	CRM system in place and as systems are upgraded and refined through Herefordshire Connects, improvements across the board

4) Employment & Training

Action	Lead Officer	Evidence	Target Date	Progress at August 06
Implement a fair employment pay and reward policy	David Johnson	Comprehensive Equality Policy	1 April 2005	Completed – implementation of job evaluation and Single Status Council-wide.
Engage in Employment equality assessment of the Local Labour Market Area	David Johnson	BVPIs in the Council's Performance Plan	Ongoing annually – reported by 30 June each financial year end	Reported on annually as part of the Council's Performance Plan and informs the Council's Pay and Workforce Development Strategy
Engage in workforce profiling and equal pay review	David Johnson	Comprehensive Equality Policy	1 April 2005	Completed. As for 'Fair Pay and Reward Policy' – above.
Ensure process in place to ensure that publicity for vacancies does not unfairly restrict the range of applicants	David Johnson	Equality statement and Disability (two ticks) symbol on all advertisements	In place.	In place.
Produce a standard range of application forms and job descriptions that are clear and explicit	David Johnson	Application forms agreed and available on-line. Job descriptions and person specifications exist for every post.	In place.	In place.
Review personnel information systems for monitoring suitability including supporting the Council's statutory ethnic monitoring duties	David Johnson	Annual audit of BVPIs takes place. Current systems provide monitoring information. Comprehensive Equality Policy	In place.	In place. Currently an audit of recruitment and selection is taking place that includes an audit of recruitment monitoring processes. However currently need to review monitoring in regards to grievance, disciplinary, training and promotion.

Action	Lead Officer	Evidence	Target Date	Progress at August 06
Ensure all employment procedures are consistent with current legislation and all relevant employment codes and practices	David Johnson	Suite of HR policies in place and are regularly reviewed re. compliance with legislation.	In place.	In place.
Develop a programme of equality training to support the CEP and service area objectives. Ensure that the training programme is consistent with the RES and DES.	Amanda Attfield	Programme developed. Information available from the Training Centre re. Courses run and attendees. Forms part of mandatory induction for all new employees. Programme includes diversity awareness, bespoke training for managers and teams, member training, impact assessment training – all of which support the CEP and service area objectives	In place.	In place. Programme to support Year 3 equality impact assessments commenced in 2006. Diversity awareness incorporated into central induction from Sep 05. Race equality sessions delivered on a monthly basis open to all staff. Member awareness sessions scheduled Sep/Oct 2006. DES training to be developed